

Sample of introduction and speaker's notes by Huh Nam-woong, film critic

The Swedish Film Selection 2020

Speaker's notes – a sample from Seoul, South Korea

Many Swedish films and filmmakers are familiar to Korean movie fans. To take some examples, Ingmar Bergman, the byword of the Swedish film, Alicia Vikander, who won the Academy Award for Best Actress, Ruben Östlund, who is famous for receiving Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for his film *The Square*, Ingrid Bergman who has adorned the golden age of classic Hollywood films, Stellan Skarsgård, Alexander & Bill Skarsgård who are performing greatly in Hollywood, etc. Just like this, the Swedish film industry is filling an important page in world film history.

This is the ninth year since the Swedish Film Festival began its dialogue with Korean movie fans. In addition to aforementioned films from famous directors, it has introduced movies that Korean fans did not know previously and played an important role in establishing Swedish film culture in Korea. Indeed, the 9th Swedish Film Festival continues this tradition. From SF to documentary, from independence to solidarity, from artists well-known in Korea to unfamiliar names, the keywords that penetrate the whole festival are '**Gender Equality**' and '**Diversity**'.

Among the 10 films introduced in the 9th Swedish Film Festival, seven are directed by female directors (including two co-directors); four of them featured female main character. Also, this year's Swedish Film Festival will feature a special exhibition and display of the 'Pioneering Women in Film'. Compared to other countries, Sweden has one of the most advanced film industries in terms of gender equality. Nevertheless, if you examine the works that received greater attention, there is more discrepancy in the gender ratio. Therefore, the 'Pioneering Women in Film' special exhibition will highlight the role women have played in the Swedish film industry in every era and invite people to engage and think about what the next remains to be done to fight inequality.

Themes:

1. In search of My Life: *King of Atlantis*, *Britt-Marie Was Here*, *Sune vs Sune*

The opening film of the year is *King of Atlantis*. The main characters in the film are a father and a son. The father, suffering from schizophrenia, regards himself as the king of Atlantis. Son tries to satisfy his father by acting as if he is the prince. Giving up his studies at a prestigious university in London and working part-time job in a supermarket, he feels that his future has been held back by his father and he is not satisfied with his life.

King of Atlantis is a film that is based on a true story, and Simon Settergren who starred as the son in the movie also participated in writing the script. This film questions son's unconditional commitment to his father, engaging the audience and making them think about it more deeply. The viewers will find themselves focused on how the son frees himself from the heavy duty of supporting his father and goes back to living his own life.

Popular films such as *King of Atlantis* have gone beyond the value of entertainment and have really given comfort to the audience, because they depict lives that people can empathize with. This is also true of the novel, *Britt-Marie Was Here* by Frederick Backman, who became a

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world-renowned writer after publishing *A Man Called Ove*. Britt-Marie ends her 40-year marriage because of her husband's affair. The disaster she suddenly faced gave her a shock. Britt-Marie keeps saying to herself 'let's get it done one by one'. Her journey of finding new haven, getting a job, getting to know people, and thus escaping the bridle of marital life and reaching independence leaves a deep, lingering impression on the audience, in addition to being fun to watch.

In addition to independence, solidarity is a good way to maintain one's identity. Sune, an elementary school student in *Sune vs Sune*, has been offended since the beginning of school. A transfer student with the same name comes, but he is handsome, affable, and also mesmerizes Sune's girlfriend. For him, this is a 'war' to reclaim his own name. It emphasizes how pure the confrontation between Sune and Sune is by cutely featuring monsters and aliens. In the end, Sunes' reconciling with each other and putting arms around each other's shoulder leaves audience grinning.

2. Shaking the World: *Aniara*, *Lucky One*, *Stieg Larsson - The Man Who Played with Fire* and *The Raft*

We must also turn to films that surprise the audience with plots and stories different from the popular films. *Aniara* is a recent achievement of Swedish cinema. *Aniara*, a film based on the poem with the same title by Nobel Prize winner Harry Martinson, is an SF, not a common genre Swedish cinema. The movie earned Best Director Award, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress and Best Visual Effects at the 2018 Guldbagge Awards, the Swedish national film awards. This film depicts how *Aniara*, a spacecraft that was heading to Mars in search of a new migration site, is lost in space. If it was a Hollywood movie, it would have depicted violence to provoke and attract attention, but *Aniara* philosophically examines the relationship between infinite universe and finite humanity.

Lucky One is a work that requires a different way of appreciation compared to other popular movies. Indeed, we could classify it as gangster movie because the main character is a gangster. However, the main character rarely shows up in the film. Only the perspective of the main character is seen on the screen, there are conversations between the main character and his daughter and between him and a trafficking victim. This movie does not feature violent images typical of the genre. Therefore, this static and poetic atmosphere completely changes our concept of gangster movie as we know it.

Stieg Larsson of the Millennium series is a world-renowned writer. He has also been a journalist who went against the Nazis with his pen to uphold the value of democracy. *Stieg Larsson - The Man Who Played with Fire* is a documentary that focuses on the latter. Indeed, two public identities of Stieg Larsson are connected. Therefore, this documentary is precious, it tries to understand him and guide people to look deeper into his novels.

There are also some documentaries that do not feature famous stars like Stieg Larsson but are interesting because of the content itself. *Santiago*, a social anthropologist in *The Raft*, gathered a group of people and carried out an experiment - to sail across the Atlantic Ocean in a small boat. He was sure that if these people were faced with isolation, they would descend into collective madness. As these people gathered together again after 43 years, the conclusions made were completely different from Santiago's ideas. Humans facing extreme situations are not always violent; this movie has something to tell us, especially in our era of COVID-19 outbreak.

3. Pioneering Women in Film (toolkit): *Girl in Tails, Loving Couples, Mozart Brothers*

In line with promoting diversity, the Swedish Film Festival prepared a special exhibition titled 'Pioneering Women in Film'. Indeed, the fight for women's rights to ensure the equal gender distribution in the movie industry has been ongoing, from the days of silent film until now. These films include those that show the lives of women or are themselves produced by women. This special exhibition is significant in that it re-illuminates the performance of women, as if reopening the page of a history that was folded and covered.

Girl in Tails is a story about a woman who confronts social inequality. The confrontation began with her brother, to whom their father bought everything while he never bought clothes she could wear to party. She creatively thought that if there was no dress, then she could wear a tailcoat to the party. This is about the resistance to social inequality. Just like the classical silent film, rich facial expressions and rhythmic actions effectively convey heavy themes in a romantic and humorous atmosphere.

Midsommar, the main background in *Loving Couples*, is a festival of women who say farewell to the conservative constraints placed on women in relation to love, marriage and sex. The atmosphere of this film, as it is created on a black and white screen, is filled with the pain, troubles, and anguish that women experience. Indeed, it depicts the struggles of three women who visited the hospital on the same day – their stories and the confusion they experience.

Mozart Brothers is a work by Suzanne Osten, a female director who won the director's award at the 1986 Guldbagge Awards. The movie depicts a conflict concerning the modern adaptation of the opera *Don Giovanni*. The innovative ideas of the movie director Walter were rejected by the actors. This was because they knew only how to functionally reproduce the opera, but never actively interpreted it in a new way. *The Mozart Brothers* tries to persuade us that classics can be reinterpreted in different eras, and the reactions to this will always follow.

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